

VZCZCXRO1161
PP RUEHROV
DE RUEHJM #0175 0290843
ZNY CCCCC ZZH
P 290843Z JAN 10
FM AMCONSUL JERUSALEM
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 7419
INFO RUEHXK/ARAB ISRAELI COLLECTIVE
RHEHNSC/NSC WASHDC

C O N F I D E N T I A L JERUSALEM 000175

SIPDIS

NEA FOR FRONT OFFICE, SEMEP, AND NEA/IPA; NSC FOR SHAPIRO/KUMAR

E.O. 12958: DECL: 01/27/2020
TAGS: PGOV PREL KPAL IS KDEM
SUBJECT: HATEM ABDEL QADER ON FATAH, ELECTIONS, AND JERUSALEM

REF: 09 JERUSALEM 1790

Classified By: Consul General Daniel Rubinstein
for reasons 1.4 (b,d).

¶1. (C) In a January 22 meeting with Post, Fatah activist and former Palestinian Authority (PA) Minister for Jerusalem Affairs Hatem Abdel Qader said that with local government elections on the horizon, Fatah needed to "build confidence between the party and the people" by focusing on social issues and public messaging. "Hamas is working (in Gaza) on the social front," he said, "in schools, in clinics. We must face Hamas on the ground, not just on the political level."

¶2. (C) Abdel Qader argued that Fatah had significant room for improvement in its internal organization, saying that the new Fatah Central Committee (FCC), especially FCC member Mahmoud al-Aloul, "has a vision... but it's not enough -- we have to descend to the grassroots." Abdel Qader also noted that Fatah is not yet ready for national elections. He estimated that Fatah will need at least six months to address key organizational challenges, such as its poor strategic communications infrastructure.

¶3. (C) On Jerusalem, Abdel Qader said that efforts to establish an Israeli presence in Arab neighborhoods of the Holy Basin were ongoing. "The danger is in the five kilometers around the Old City," he said. In outlying Palestinian neighborhoods of East Jerusalem, such as Silwan, Beit Hanina, and Shu'fat, "there is no danger" from these efforts. However, Abdel Qader noted, in the inner neighborhoods of the Holy Basin, "the Israelis are trying to make a demographic and historic change."

¶4. (C) He noted that community organizers in the al-Bustan area of Silwan (one such Holy Basin neighborhood) had rejected the Jerusalem municipality's most recent proposal to demolish homes in half of al-Bustan to create open parkland. He noted that negotiations between residents and the municipality are ongoing. Abdel Qader said that a solution could be found if all displaced residents are allowed to remain in al-Bustan ("and not send them to Shu'fat or some other area.") Abdel Qader also reported that a team of Palestinian lawyers recently traveled to Istanbul in an attempt to challenge Ottoman-era land deeds presented by Israeli pro-settlement groups to justify the eviction of Arab families from their homes in Sheikh Jarrah.

RUBINSTEIN